

Dec. 11, 1944

Darling,

Things have continued quiet here. Today was clear and cool in the morning, with clouds and rain in the afternoon. Yesterday, for a short time, there was a flurry of snow, big wet flakes, that dissolved when they hit. This muddy cold is tough on the boys in the lines! There are few enough comforts in a fox-hole in summer; in winter it is just plain hell. Many of the boys are ingenious in staying dry and warm, but at best it is tough. We are living in shameful comfort in our school-house! There is no action around us to cause us concern. (No buzz-bombs, thank goodness!) So we have little cause to complain.

Today we had our first patient for some time. A discouraging thing, about a quarter of his brains blown out. For some unaccountable reason he is still alive, but it would be better in the long run for him if he doesn't make it. At best he could end up half-blind, partially paralyzed, speechless, and subject to fits. Not a pretty picture.

* * * * *

(Later)

Well, he didn't make it, poor fellow. It is constantly amazing the terrific tenacity to life that these boys manifest. It is impossible to exaggerate what wonderful patients American boys are. They are brave and patient, seldom complaining, always cooperative. They accept pain without moans. They seldom become demanding of attention, no fussing for little things, nor claiming petty comforts as their due. They have complete trust and faith in their medical corps. They accept unhesitatingly and with confidence whatever their surgeon tells them must be done; and they are grateful. When they leave your care, they try to tell you in their half-embarrassed, half-humorous way their appreciation of your work in their behalf. It doesn't take many "Gee, Doc, guess I was plumb lucky to have been brought in here" to drive the fatigue from your bones, and give you new life and hope.

How can one do too much for these boys, who have given everything, and demand so little?

It is a universal experience among my friends, as with myself, that the average German patient is utterly different. He is whining, groaning, demanding. He expects everything, yet is grateful for nothing. He is uncooperative, and often refuses treatment. Three Jerries are more noisy and more trouble than a ward-full of American boys. Although he is a proud, arrogant winner, when he is hurt, he gets scared and cries. He seems to lack an inner strength of spirit; he whimpers and begs and threatens and demands. It may be that it is a difference in custom. Our boys are too proud of themselves to "play the baby"; Jerry apparently doesn't care, and apparently loses no caste in the eyes of his fellows when he does. Be that as it may,

Page 2 - of letter dated Dec. 11, 1944

the difference is striking. They too, however, have tremendous vitality, and often make miraculous recoveries.

Well, darling, so much for tonight. We plan a little feast later on, with lobster a la Newburg. Merry Christmas.

Lots of love,

H